

SHEILA JORDAN HARVIE S

Yesterdays



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HCD 7234

- 1 YESTERDAYS 4:17
- 2 BETTER THAN ANYTHING 3:21
- 3 THE VERY THOUGHT OF YOU 6:22
- 4 YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT LOVE IS 4:21
- 5 IT DON'T MEAN A THING (IF IT AIN'T GOT THAT SWING) 3:51
- 6 FATS WALLER MEDLEY 8:17
Honeysuckle Rose / Ain't Misbehavin'
- 7 MOOD INDIGO 4:32
- 8 WALTZ FOR DEBBY 2:55
(Lazy Days – additional lyrics by Bill Oddie)
- 9 I CONCENTRATE ON YOU 4:38
- 10 LAZY AFTERNOON 5:46
- 11 BLUE SKIES 2:29
- 12 FRED ASTAIRE MEDLEY 4:17
Let's Face the Music and Dance / Cheek to Cheek / I Could Have Danced All Night

VOCALS

SHEILA JORDAN

BASS

HARVIE S



PRODUCED BY EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
Harvie S Joe Fields

Yesterdays

Recorded live in concert, circa 1990
Mixed by David Stoller
Mastered by Kevin Blackler, Blackler Mastering
Traycard photo courtesy of Harvie S
Design: Peter Muller, Littlefield and Company

FOR A FREE CATALOG WRITE:
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When the National Endowment for the Arts announced singer Sheila Jordan as a recipient of the 2012 Jazz Masters Award, a quiet ripple of affirmation spread throughout the jazz community. Her fellow artists and fans have witnessed Jordan's struggle to survive and pursue her art in the face of indifference and ignorance for many decades. That struggle has forged an utterly singular vocalist who, like all of the jazz greats, can be recognized in a couple of bars, if not notes.

Jordan's intimate voice explores melody, rhythm and time within an improvisational framework. She often interprets standard material, but never in a standard way.

Her biographer, vocalist and educator Ellen Johnson, notes: "I think part of the reason she's not better known and more widely accepted is because she doesn't have a classically large voice. But she has the most refined sense of dynamics and color for her range of any singer that I know of. She's all about subtleties; she'll always surprise you with something new."

Born of a teenage mother in Detroit, Sheila was sent to the Pennsylvania coal country to live with her grandparents. She sang as a child to while away the time and block out the negativity and poverty. Relocating to urban Detroit at 14, she heard eight bars of Charlie Parker on a jukebox and the effect was revelatory. "The first time I heard

Bird," she relates, "he changed my life. I'd never heard anything like it. I heard him and I knew that's what I wanted to do with my life. Hearing him—even today—is such a humbling experience for me."

Parker embraced her as a singer, praising her "million dollar ears." She married his pianist, Duke Jordan, further immersing herself in bebop. As part of her studies with pianist Lennie Tristano in the early 1950s, she engaged in duets with bassist Peter Ind. Charles Mingus invited Sheila onstage for a duet on "Yesterdays" and the bass and voice combination—heard today in the most adventurous quarters of jazz—was born.

Composer/theorist George Russell championed Jordan, producing the **Portrait of Sheila** album, Blue Note's first vocal release, in 1964. Russell's ultramodern arrangement of "You Are My Sunshine," a tune from her youth, became an underground sensation. By then she was a single mother, surviving as a secretary and singing when she could. "I've been on my own since I was 18 years old," she offers. "I learned how to live and get by with less. That gives you strength."

Sheila embraced free jazz and it further loosened her bebop confines. She co-led a quartet with pianist Steve Kuhn in the 1980s; that's where she rekindled her interest in the bass and voice format. Harvie Swartz (now known professionally as Harvie S) was the bassist. On tour, he was the only one in the group

who had his instrument in his hotel room. "Sheila would knock on my door," he says, "and she'd say, 'Let's do some tunes.'"

In all seriousness, she states: "Sometimes I think I might have been a bass player in a former life. I love the sound of the bass, and the space it provides. My favorite way to sing is with a bass."

Their association as a duo ran nearly a decade and a half. It yielded three albums, though Harvie was never happy with the results. "We never had a representative CD," he believes. "A couple of them were made under some of the worst conditions imaginable. One was recorded in a hall in 40-degree weather. Sheila wore her winter coat and a scarf. I could barely move my fingers; they were frozen."

Ellen Johnson observes this about Sheila and Harvie: "They had the ability to become a unit of sound—with the lowest sound range from the bass, and her voice way up on top. The more creative license you give her, the more she can do with it. She doesn't need a piano to supply notes every single moment; in fact, she doesn't want it. Harvie gave her a blank canvas. Harvie was like Steve Kuhn to her—they both allowed things to happen."

Sheila appreciates Harvie's support. "He is such a phenomenal bassist," she notes, "with all that technique. He's very creative. We worked on the arrangements together but he

was always there with a chart."

"Part of her gift of singing with the bass," Johnson continues, "is her ability to hear how all of the other parts fit in, even though they're not being stated. And that's a gift Sheila has in spades. They would complement each other in great ways. He gave her music a large palette to work off of—more than just time."

The previously unreleased recording at hand captures the duo at a concert near the conclusion of their partnership. It's full of musical adventure and playful spontaneity: like her humorous recounting of a questionable review in the middle of "The Very Thought of You," and the flight into steeplechase time on "Honeysuckle Rose." Harvie points out: "You can tell we were having fun. And the audience was fantastic; they stayed on our every note."

He's clear on the recording's worth: "I feel vindicated by this album. We only recorded three other CDs but the magic is on this one. This recording is us; it's what we did best."

Sheila still works in the bass and voice format, now with Cameron Brown. Awards notwithstanding, she is characteristically humble about her life's work. "I was never a diva," Jordan says. "I just want to be a messenger for this music."

— Kirk Silsbee

- 1 **YESTERDAYS** 4.17
(J. Kern / O. Harbach) (Universal Polygram Int'l Publishing) ASCAP
- 2 **BETTER THAN ANYTHING** 3.21
(B. Loughborough / D. Wheat) (Figs D Music / Sanga Music Inc.) BMI
- 3 **THE VERY THOUGHT OF YOU** 6.22
(R. Noble) (Tetrauq Music Inc. / Range Road Music) ASCAP
- 4 **YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT LOVE IS** 4.21
(D. Raye / G. de Paul) (Universal Music Corp.) ASCAP
- 5 **IT DON'T MEAN A THING (IF IT AIN'T GOT THAT SWING)** 3.54
(E. Ellington / I. Mills) (Duke Ellington Music / EMI Mills Music) ASCAP
- 6 **FATS WALLER MEDLEY** 8.17
Honeysuckle Rose (T. Waller / A. Razaf) (Chappell & Co. / Razaf Music Co.) ASCAP
Ain't Misbehavin' (T. Waller / H. Brooks / A. Razaf) (Anne Rachel Music / EMI Mills Music / Razaf Music) ASCAP
- 7 **MOOD INDIGO** 4.32
(I. Mills / B. Bigard / E. Ellington) (Indigo Mood Music / EMI Mills Music / SONY/ATV Harmony) ASCAP
- 8 **WALTZ FOR DEBBY** 2.55
(LAZY DAYS – additional lyrics by Bill Oddie)
(B. Evans / G. Lees) (Folkways Music Publishers) ASCAP
- 9 **I CONCENTRATE ON YOU** 4.38
(C. Porter) (Chappell & Co.) ASCAP
- 10 **LAZY AFTERNOON** 5.46
(J. Moross / J. Latouche) (Chappell & Co. / SONY/ATV Times) ASCAP
- 11 **BLUE SKIES** 2.29
(I. Berlin) (Irving Berlin Music Co.) ASCAP
- 12 **FRED ASTAIRE MEDLEY** 4.17
Let's Face the Music and Dance (I. Berlin) (Irving Berlin Music Co.) ASCAP
Cheek to Cheek (I. Berlin) (Irving Berlin Music Co.) ASCAP
I Could Have Danced All Night (A. Lerner / F. Loewe) (Chappell & Co.) ASCAP

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COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO

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